

Remarks:

This amendment is submitted in an earnest effort to advance this case to issue without delay. The examiner has indicated that the case contains allowable subject matter.

Claims 37 and 40 have been amended to state that the retaining formation is unitarily formed with the first shell. This feature is important in this type of adapter that is intended to hold electrical parts that conduct a dangerous amount of electricity, typically full line current. Securing together the two shells with separate screws, invariably made of metal, introduces into the structure conductive parts that are potential paths for conducting electricity to the exterior. Through a manufacturing defect, damage from installation or use, or the like, it is possible for the electrically live elements in the adapter to contact any metal mounting screws and create a serious shock potential for the use of the device. When the two dielectric shells are held together by a dielectric part formed on one of them, the result is a structure with no such shock potential.

Thus the system of DE '681 using separate metal screws to hold the adapter halves together is structurally different, so that at the least a §102 rejection on this reference is impossible. The replacement of the screws with integral nonconductive retaining formations that act as clips or snap fasteners thus not only

simplifies construction and makes the adapter cheaper to manufacture, but has the surprising advantage of eliminating a potential hazard for the user. Thus a §103 rejection of claims 37 and 40 is also out of the question.

Going further, the system of claim 41, with a unitary membrane hinge, also decreases shock hazard by holding one side of the adapter together with a dielectric part, since the membrane hinge is inherently dielectric as it is unitarily formed with the two dielectric shells. Thus the membrane hinge of claim 41 confers the same shock-reducing benefit described above and provides a new and unobvious advantage over this structure.

Furthermore as shown by the hatching in FIG. 11 of DE '681 the adapter there is not made of two parts, but instead has a housing made of three parts. For this reason it would be very, very difficult if not impossible to provide it with the claim 41 membrane hinge. Undoubtedly it is this three-part construction that requires that the DE '681 adapter be put together with separate fasteners, that is screws.

More specifically the three parts according to FIG. 11 of DE '681 must be put together by first securing the unreferenced part shown at the upper right to the part shown on the left, then this subassembly is joined to the third part shown on the lower left. FIG. 3 shows how three screw 27 are employed to hold the assembly together. This means that, if the three parts of this assembly were to be assembled with membrane hinges, they would have

to extend in the mold at right angles to each other, something that requires a mold of a complexity not normally considered practical. Thus DE '681 teaches away from the instant invention.

In US 3,519,978 of Taormina there is, indeed, a two-part structure with a membrane hinge, but it is not an adapter of the type defined in claim 41. Here the structure is a simple pair of generally complementary plates held together on one edge by a membrane hinge and on the opposite edge by an integral clip. Conductors are sandwiched between the plates to properly orient plug connectors on their ends.

What is more, Taormina '978 deals with a connector used in a low-voltage direct-current setting in a motor vehicle. The instant invention is aimed at a device used in a high-voltage alternating-current setting for connecting a light fixture to line voltage. The two environments are quite different, mainly because the danger of personal injury is nil to zero in the motor vehicle, but substantial in the environment of the current invention.

The examiner's attention is directed to new claims 42 and 43. Claim 42 recites the novel unitary construction of the retaining formations, and claim 43 describes their orientation near the membrane hinge.

For these reasons the claims are allowable. Notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

If only minor problems that could be corrected by means of a telephone conference stand in the way of allowance of this case, the examiner is invited to call the undersigned to make the necessary corrections.

Respectfully submitted,
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Enclosure: None.